

## THE TWINS BORROW A HORSE

We were horse crazy and used to walk  
miles to find any horse to ride:  
the little dappled gray mare the Snyder boys  
had teased into something close to meanness  
was a challenge; she'd start out walking  
with her ears pinned back tight to her head,  
her eye bright and I--when it was my turn--  
would talk to her, try to win her over.  
She was trim, after all, in spite  
of the peppery coat, and had small hooves.

I'd start to think she was nice and wonder  
why she didn't relax, stick up her ears.  
Or my eyes would stray to the woods beside me,  
to ground flaked by crenelated oak leaves,  
to the white blooms of dogwood floating  
in the cool shade. It was then she'd suddenly whirl,  
jump stiff-legged and squeal--a high-pitched shriek  
she galloped home on. There, by the barn door,  
my twin was smiling for her turn.

It was her chance to try to undo  
what our little mare's masters had done,  
to make her forget those bullies and the way  
they'd stick a big foot under her foreleg  
to trip her onto her knees or slap her  
into a gallop, then suddenly shout in her ear,  
haul back hard on the reins and force her around.

We each dreamed we could undo her nervous prance,  
teach her to love us. One of us would triumph  
and get her to come docile as a doe for oats  
from our hands, eyes full of a liquid love,  
full of a permanent and decided preference.